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JAPANESE ART.

Japan is a name to conjure with. To tell anyone at the present day that Japanese art is eminent; that after 1860 it was the inspiration of the newest phase of French art, inaugurated by Manet, which called itself Impressionism; that Whistler found himself through the study of the esthetic character of *l'art Japonaise*; that it is the purest survival of the classic simplicity of Greek sculpture—all this will be conceded now on general principles, although it is not so many years ago that two apparently intelligent Americans were standing at the curb, when passed a few little dainty almond-eyed Japanese maidens, with delicately tinted silken robes flapping round their ankles, and big, bright *obis* tied between their shoulders. Said one of the apparently intelligent Americans to the other: "Hullo! what is it—Persians?" Saith the other: "No; Dagos." Information about the land of the Rising Sun has, however, reached even the commercial man who only knows about stocks and bonds and the wheat crop, and Japanese art is being looked at, not so much as a curiosity, but for its esthetic and decorative supremacy.

The museums have contributed much to this information. Foremost stands the Boston Museum with its magnificent collection of prints, a fit monument of the late Curator Koehler, and the Weld and the Bigelow collections of Japanese swords, which are far more valuable than the much-overrated Brayton Ives collection in the Metropolitan Museum. Mr. W. T. Walters, of Baltimore, was an enthusiastic collector, while Mr. Frederick Stearns, of Detroit, has also a wonderful collection of Japanese art which is in the Detroit Museum. Mr. Quincy Shaw, of Boston, and Mr. Louis Wertheimer, of New York, have been among the first collectors.

Japanese pictorial art is very little understood. The unaffected *naïveté*, its almost childlike grace, its unfailing success in color, the strength of its composition are the elements we should admire. Japan derived its art originally from the Koreans, who had theirs from the Chinese; these derived instruction from India, where the best traits were imbued by the Greek influence brought by Alexander the Great in his Indian conquests. Hence the simple curves of Okumara Masanobu (18th century) indicate the Greek origin of all Japanese art, modified by more decorative elements, nobility, grace and exquisite technique.

The characteristics of Japanese art are remarkable, both in what it has and what it lacks. Its prime qualities lie in the fundamentals of line and color. The supreme control of line is best described by antithesis, as being firm, yet free and flexible, showing power, yet grace of touch, possessing both decision and elegance. The gracefulness of Kano Yusha's drawing (17th century) is sharp and crisp; Sesshu (15th century) shows the nervous energy of the master hand in the angular, rugged and vibrating movement of his brush.

There is a simple reason for the masterful control of line, which may be called the calligraphic quality of Japanese art, and which leads Richard Muther to declare that the Japanese are the greatest draughtsmen upon earth. This is the exclusive use of the brush for writing, drawing and painting. The Japanese also hold the roll of paper in the left hand instead of laying it upon a table, working, therefore, from the shoulder and elbow as well as from the wrist of the right hand. The paper, furthermore, is porous and rapidly absorbs ink, showing immediately what has been done. The striving for beauty in line is a tradition of Japanese art which has been retained to the present time.

The glory of color-harmony found in Japanese productions has placed these artists among the greatest colorists that ever limned—equal to the Venetians, to Rembrandt, Turner, Bes-

nard. Nobuzane (13th century), Korin (early 18th century), and particularly the color-print artists from Hishikawa Moronobu to Hiroshige, use color in its most refined tones—in tints or shades, with marvelous, delicate gradations.

Three negative characteristics of Japanese art must be noticed, to which it owes much of its quaint charm and most of its faults. These are the absence of chiaroscuro, of linear perspective, and of anatomical modeling. A projected shadow is never seen, the diffusion of light is always uniform, high lights are never used, and hence the eyes of men and of animals show no life. At the same time aerial perspective is rather exaggerated, while there is a total neglect of foreshortening. The treatment of clouds is conventional, but rain and mist are depicted to perfection, while water lacks reflection and transparency.

As to composition, we cannot observe the adherence to rules, but the Japanese artist is generally led aright by an intuitive sense of fitness and picturesqueness. He avoids identical forms or symmetrical arrangement—the Japanese has a passion for irregularity. Yet, how intensely does he not conceal his art beneath a look of Nature, while eliminating again from Nature that which inveighs against his decorative sense; that is, his instinct for the beautiful. So is the very absence of chiaroscuro and linear perspective a gain to his decorative intent, which calls for simplicity and suggestiveness rather than scientific completeness. Thus his lines, masses and colors are brought together in shade, or hue, or disposition with such restless, inventive energy that they seem to be wrought into "visual music."

The first period of Japanese painting, called the Chinese Hieratic, ran from the ninth to the twelfth centuries and was exclusively religious. The characteristics were firm lines and colors in high tones and gold, as beffited the dark temple interiors. Yeishin, who was the Fra Angelico of Japan, Kobo and Kanaoka were famous artists of this time.

Civil wars gave rise to another school during the 13th and 14th centuries, the Japanese Historical or Yamato-Tosa, when masses gain unity by the totality of their motion. When the Ashikaga dynasty restored peace a Chinese-derived school of landscape painting was established, interpreting nature by poetic idealism. The first great artist of this Japanese Renaissance was Sesshu, whose style combines simplicity and force, and who was followed by Kano Masanobu.

The fourth and last period was the Realistic and Genre School, which added to the superb line of the preceding periods exquisite color. Familiar motives are given in astonishing simplicity and with pictorial charm rendered through the simple strokes of the brush with a powerful, moving spirit. The principal sub-divisions of this period are three.

First, the Korin School with aristocratic tendencies and largely decorative. Its breadth of drawing and wealth of color in treating plants and flowers are inimitable.

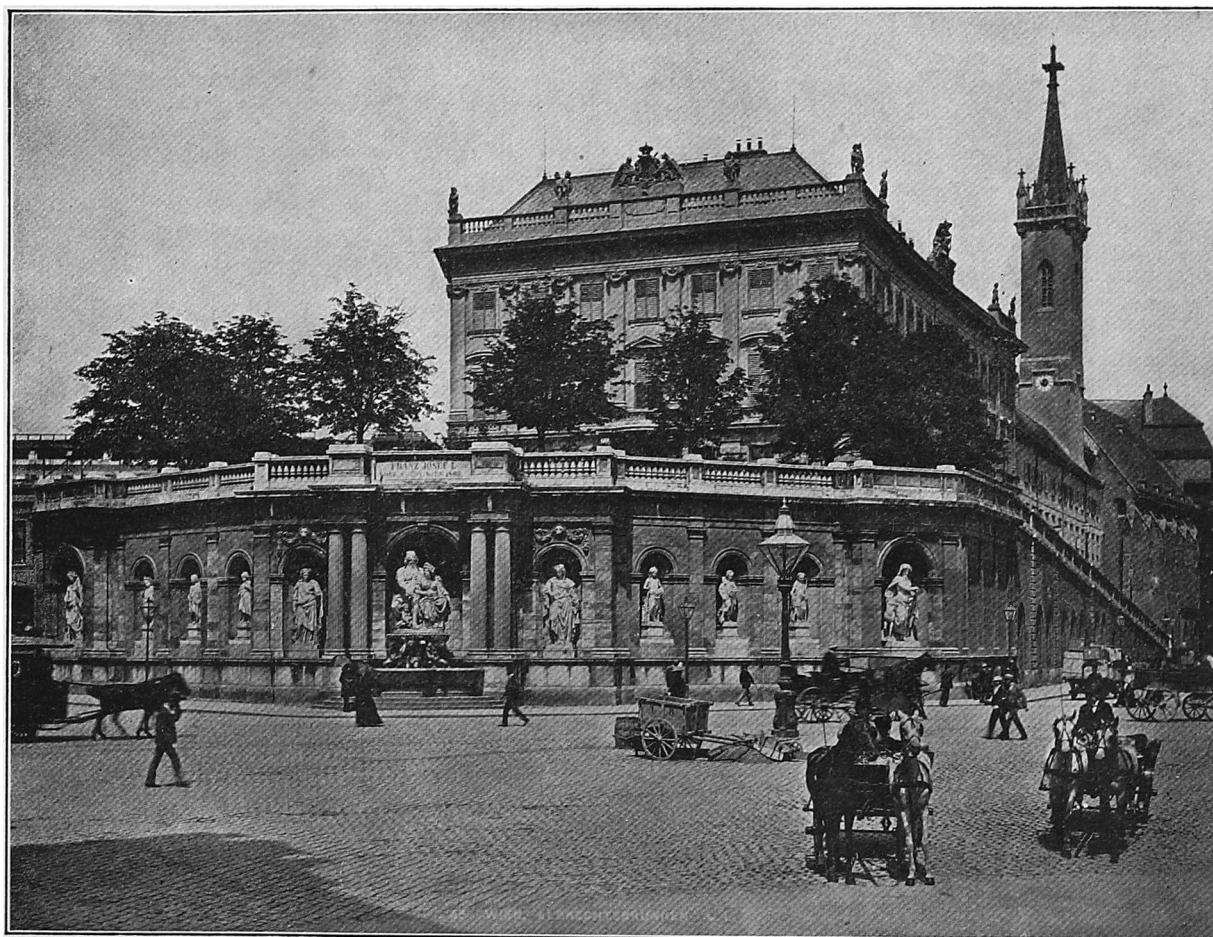
The Shijo School was located at Kyoto and named after a bridge where the scholars foregathered. It excelled in its limning of fish, monkeys, tigers and an impressionistic treatment of landscape. Shiogama's lightly-tinted sketches approach the limit of perfection in their realization of atmospheric effects and suggestion of color and distance.

The third division was the Ukiyo-ye of Tokio, most original and characteristic in its depicting contemporary and common life. Though its strange tints and brutal frankness have been condemned as vulgar, it solved, as never elsewhere has been done, the problem of a primary grammar of harmony in a few juxtaposed tones.

Back of all Japanese art lies the Oriental mind which revels

in symbolism, in allegory teaching some virtue or moral, in pretty poetic fancy, a reminder of some historical heroism held up as an example, or some historical iniquity held up as a warning. This Orientalism has a serene contempt for in-

dividualism, and cares mainly for the types, the big main elements, the fundamental principles. To understand Japanese art fully we must first gain some understanding of the Japanese mind and be in sympathetic accord.



THE ALBRECHT'S FOUNTAIN—VIENNA.

AN EXAMPLE OF MUNICIPAL ART.

MUNICIPAL ART.

BY WM. LAUREL HARRIS.

NATIONAL CAPITOLS AND HALLS OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

When States or nations are firmly established their legislative halls or capitols always assume a monumental character.

In time past it has never been sufficient that these buildings should simply answer the bare utilitarian needs of the government, but they have always been designed as works of art.

And it is in decorating great public buildings that the greatest schools of painting have been developed. Under the absolute monarchies and paternal governments of remote antiquity, kings and emperors built gorgeous governmental palaces, glorifying thereby their executive power.

When the lawmaking was in the hands of high ecclesiastics, vast buildings arose, half religious, half civil, that answered the needs of the people. And under the republican form of government, the public buildings were no less stately and no less worthy of the people's pride. All these various forms of national capitols were richly decorated.

The great buildings of India, Asia Minor, Egypt, Persia and even in the remote countries of the Far East, have been covered

with mural painting, both on the interior and upon the exterior. And the classic buildings known as Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Etruscan and Roman were all splendid in the richness of their color decorations. Nor was all this ornamentation an aimless struggle for rich effects. It was a national endeavor to express in fitting form the hopes and ideals of the people.

Leaving the classic period, we find that our immediate ancestors in the countries of northern and western Europe employed gold and color on their government buildings with rare discretion and marvellous splendor.

There have been, however, two periods when color decorations were somewhat neglected, when the governments failed to call upon the mural painters for great compositions embodying the national ideals in pictorial form.

The first of these two periods was in Imperial Rome, when splendid effects were obtained by the juxtaposition of different colored marbles.

But this taste for sumptuous halls and gorgeous apartments soon degenerated into mere show.

The public, then no longer seeing in the government build-